

THE PICTURE OF DORIAN
GRAY 73

who should be always here in winter when we have no flowers to look at, and always here in summer when we want something to chill our intelligence. Don't flatter yourself, Basil: you are not in the least like him."

"You don't understand me, Harry," answered the artist.

"Of course I am not like him. I know that perfectly well.

Indeed, I should be sorry to look like him. You shrug your shoulders? I am telling you the truth. There is a fatality

about all physical and intellectual distinction, the sort of

fatality that seems to dog through history the faltering steps

of kings. It is better not to be different from one's fellows.

The ugly and the stupid have the best of it in this world. They

can sit at their ease and gape at the play. If they know nothing

of victory, they are at least spared the knowledge of defeat.

They live as we all should live, undisturbed, indifferent, and

without disquiet. They neither bring ruin upon others, nor

ever receive it from alien hands. Your rank and wealth,

Harry; my brains, such as they are—my art, whatever it may

be worth; Dorian Gray's good looks—we shall all suffer for

what the gods have given us, suffer terribly."

"Dorian Gray? Is that his name?*" asked Lord Henry,

walking across the studio towards Basil Hallward. "Yes, that is his name. I didn't intend to tell it to you."

"But why not?"

"Oh, I can't explain. When I like people immensely I never

tell their names to any one. It is like surrendering a part

of them. I have grown to love secrecy. It seems to be the

one thing that can make modern life mysterious or marvellous

to us. The commonest thing is delightful if one only hides

it. When I leave town now I never tell my people where I

am going. If I did, I would lose aU my pleasure. It is a

silly habit, I dare say, but somehow it seems to bring a great

deal of romance into one's-life. I suppose you think me awfully

foolish about it ? "

"Not at all," answered Lord Henry, "not at all, my dear

Basil. You seem to forget that I am married, and the one

charm of marriage is that it makes a life of deception absolutely

necessary for both parties. I never know where my wife is,

and my wife never knows what I am doing. When we meet—we

do meet occasionally, when we dine out together, or go down to

the Duke's—we tell each other the most absurd stories with

the most serious faces. My wife is very good at it, much

better, in fact, than I am. She never gets confused over her